

January 4, 2007

Regards: State Library Budget Hearing

Representative Wells and members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is H. John York, Jr and I am from Kalispell. I represent Flathead High School and the students of Kalispell Public Schools.

I would like to speak in reference to the InfoTrac database provided by the Montana Library Network under the auspices of the Montana State Library. This project and the resources provided have been a godsend for Kalispell Public School students and staff.

During a time when local budgets have continually decreased and resources have become more and more costly this subscription has allowed us to, not only exponentially expand our research resources, but also re-designate scarce local dollars for other types of materials and for the technology necessary to access these electronic resources. Here at Flathead High School we used to subscribe to approximately 120 print periodical titles in an attempt to provide a resource base for student and staff research. We warehoused back issues for up to 10 years. It was time consuming, costly and inefficient to say the least. When a patron lost or damaged beyond repair an issue of a periodical the resources within were no longer available. If someone had an item checked out it was unavailable for everyone else. These problems no longer exist. We now have indexed and full-text access to, literally, thousands of periodicals and journals for student and staff research. We can have 30 students all viewing the same article simultaneously for instructional purposes. Nothing is ever lost.

Last year our district averaged over 3000 minutes of connect time per month to InfoTrac. So far this year that average has increased to more than 10,000 minutes per month. We have gone from almost 1,500 searches per month to around 4,000 per month. The InfoTrac databases and the electronic reference sources included have allowed many of our teachers doing graduate and post-graduate studies to access the materials they need to complete their programs. Our International Baccalaureate students, along with our teachers, have been doing in-depth research using the InfoTrac and then requesting items, not in full-text format in InfoTrac, through the OCLC interlibrary loan network. All of this would not be possible without the Montana Library Network and the InfoTrac reference and database subscriptions.

In a state as sparsely populated and as geographically large as ours the only way we are going to be able to stay with the curve, when it comes to information access, is by providing these types of resources through projects such as the Montana Library Network. To provide these resources it takes monies for funding, but it will take fewer dollars overall if we band together and license these resources for out entire state population, at the state level, than if we individually attempt to license them. The budget for the Montana State Library is essential to the continuation of the Montana Library Network, its projects and resources.

Thank you.

H. John York, Jr, Librarian
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Representative Wells and members of the Committee:

I teach at Flathead High School in Kalispell, and I would like to speak on behalf of the hundreds of students who pass through my English classes each year.

Our state-sponsored references are an irreplaceable asset for high school research projects. The 11th grade term paper is a challenging hurdle, and it helps the student tremendously to choose a topic that s/he personally cares about. But the workability of any topic is dependent on the information available; since students generally favor contemporary topics, the tremendous variety of up-to-date material on InfoTrac forms the basis for many a successful research paper.

Also, resources such as MLNCat and InterLibrary Loan are incredibly effective at filling virtually any gap in our local holdings, resulting in a collection that responds dynamically and efficiently to the needs of the moment.

Without these assets, students would be profoundly limited in their choice of topics. Furthermore, they would lack a vital baseline of credible, published facts by which to judge the welter of pseudo-facts that swarm the Internet.

As a teacher, I find these same references indispensable for curriculum and lesson preparation, and consult them on at least a weekly basis.

Honestly, it is hard to imagine how we would function without these resources. This service overcomes the limitations of geography and local finance to provide Montanans with information access on a par with that of large city and university libraries; I urge you to renew its funding.

Thank you.

(submitted electronically)

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January 5, 2007

EXHIBIT 15
DATE 1/9/07
SB HB 2

Regards: State Library Budget Hearing

Representative Wells and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Sue Brown, and I am a teacher at Flathead High School in Kalispell.

I would like to encourage your support of continued and adequate funding for the Montana State Library statewide databases. The opportunity for our high school library to be a part of this network and to access InfoTrac is essential to our school programs.

Students at all levels use InfoTrac for their research. Because of the breadth of the types of on-line full text that this database provides, students are able to greatly enhance the quality of their research over what is traditionally available in a school library. The state support to make this database available at an affordable price to all the libraries helps to level the playing field for all regardless of location or wealth.

The database is particularly important to adequately preparing our college bound students for the rigors of research required of them at the university level. I have had the opportunity to work with our International Baccalaureate Program students and can attest to the critical necessity of providing students in our high schools with quality, peer reviewed research materials. Our students are required to complete a significant amount of research for the IB program, and they regularly find the journal databases to be very valuable. Instead of relying blindly only on internet sources which are often not credible sources, they are able to weigh the internet information against the peer reviewed information that InfoTrac makes so accessible. That allows them a basis for judging the credibility of their other sources and further strengthens their critical thinking skills.

Libraries are an important foundation of the American ideal of making information freely available to all. Information, most importantly quality information, is vital to the survival of our democracy. Little that you do as a legislator can have as significant and as positive an effect on helping to guarantee the survival of our quality democratic way of life than supporting our libraries. I strongly encourage you to fully fund the Montana State Library and the statewide network of magazine databases.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for choosing to serve in the legislature.

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